

Recovering From Sin

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It has been said that the only sure things in life, are death and taxes. There is one other sure thing that the world in general tends to overlook. It affects us all directly, or indirectly, during our lifetimes. It does not matter what country you live in, your race, your financial condition, your social status, or even your religious preference. It is ugly; it causes pain, sorrow, heartache and can even cause you to lose your eternal inheritance. However, it is something we must all bravely confront head-on and battle on a daily basis. This thing I have been describing, is sin.

No matter how careful and vigilant we are, sin will affect each and every one of us. As scripture tells us in Romans 3:23, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But, there is good news...the bible reveals to us how we can recover from sin and move forward, confident that our sins have been forgiven, cleansed, forgotten and removed from us forever. In this article we will examine the process of recovering from sin.

Defense

There are four main points that we will examine in this article, the first of these, is: **Defense**. The best offense is a good defense. Satan is at work twenty four hours a day; he keeps up a constant bombardment on our thoughts, attitudes and senses. All you have to do is just take a look at the world around you, television, billboards, magazines, music, news, videos, movies, the Internet, sin is everywhere. In fact, it is flaunted and glorified.

Things that were once unthinkable are now more and more prevalent. Our society has broken down to the point that practically anything that one wants to do is acceptable. Sin can creep in very subtly and we must constantly be on guard to protect ourselves from the influence and effects of sin. It takes a constant vigilance on our part, to prevent sin from creeping into our lives. We have to take a critical look into the spiritual mirror and be honest with ourselves about what we find there.

1 Peter 5:8

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

I find it very interesting, that Peter here uses the analogy of a lion to describe Satan. Have you ever seen a lion stalking its prey? Out on the savannah, there will be this gazelle grazing peacefully with its head down and not paying attention to anything going on around it.

A lion slinks up slowly through the grass, crawling on its belly, then, in a split second, before it even knows what hit it, the lion has the gazelle by the throat. Do you know how lions kill their prey? They don't bite them as many people assume; they grab them by the throat and clamp down, cutting off their life's breath and they slowly smother to death in the clutches of the lion.

At times, we can be like the gazelle, innocently going about our daily routines with our heads down. Not paying attention to what is going on around us and in the next instant; Satan has us by the throat. If we give in to sin, we also begin to slowly smother until we are cut off from our life's breath, God the Father. Some animal herds have sentries that watch for predators while the others are grazing. We need to be like those sentries, be sober, and be vigilant. Make no mistake, Satan is our adversary and he would like nothing more than to cause us to lose out on our crown of life.

Realization

So, you were putting up a good fight, but your defenses slipped just for an instant and you sinned. Now what? That brings me to my second point: **Realization**. The first step to recovering from sin, is realizing that you have sinned. It sounds simple, but this is not always an easy thing to do. It can be very difficult for us to be honest with ourselves and admit that we made a mistake. Maybe your sin was something done in anger, in the heat of the moment and you feel justified in your actions. Whatever the cause may be, it is extremely important and vital to our spiritual health to recognize when there is sin.

It is the subtle sins that can creep into your everyday life and that can even become habit that we really have to be on guard and watch out for. The Pharisees were a prime example, of letting sin become a part of your everyday life. They had even developed rituals that they had incorporated into their religious belief system. They had all the outward trappings of devout and religious men, but Christ rebuked them for their self-righteousness and blindness to their own sin.

Luke 18:10-14

¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men – extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Publican realized he was a sinner and that he had sinned, he was agonizing over what he had done. The Pharisee was blinded by his self-righteousness, believing that he was above sin and in every way correct in the letter of the law. Christ says here, that the man who realized he had sinned went home justified. Realization of sin is a very important matter!

Repentance

Once you have recognized that you have sinned, where do you go from there? Point three: **Repentance**. It does not matter how badly you have fallen, if you go to God, confess your sin, pray for forgiveness and turn from that sin, your record is wiped clean. God is compassionate, loving, kind and quick to forgive when we come to him in sincere repentance and confess our sins to him.

Psalm 103:11-14

¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;
¹² As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.
¹³ As a father pities *his* children,
So the Lord pities those who fear Him.
¹⁴ For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we *are* dust.

God created us, He formed and shaped us. He knows our weaknesses...He wants us to come to Him for help and for forgiveness. There is an account in the bible that we can take heart and benefit from greatly. There was a man whom God called a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). A man who broke God's law and committed grievous sins, yet God still loved him. God placed him in a high position and gave him rulership over all of Israel...that man is David.

Let us take a look at an incident that occurred in David's life, when he lusted after another man's wife. How many of the commandments did David break when he sinned with Bathsheba? He committed adultery, he coveted his neighbor's possessions and he committed murder indirectly when he caused Uriah to be killed.

We find the account of David's repentance in Psalm 51, David's heartfelt prayer is accepted by God and he is forgiven of his sin. Please take the time to read this absolutely beautiful, prayer of repentance.

Psalm 51

1 Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.

4 Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight –
That You may be found just when You speak,*
And blameless when You judge.

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.

6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

8 Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.

9 Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,

And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.

¹³ *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,

And sinners shall be converted to You.

¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,

The God of my salvation,

And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,

And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

¹⁶ For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*;

You do not delight in burnt offering.

¹⁷ The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit,

A broken and a contrite heart —

These, O God, You will not despise.

¹⁸ Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion;

Build the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,

With burnt offering and whole burnt offering;

Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

Still, God loved David and did not take his kingdom, or position away from him. David was not always quick to recognize when he had sinned, but he never failed to repent when he went astray. God forgave him, but he suffered all manners and sorts of problems in his family due to his disobedience. David's example was left for us, to show us that God is all merciful and forgiving and that we can also be forgiven no matter how badly we have transgressed God's law.

Isaiah 1:18

¹⁸ "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord,

"Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow;

Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

God wants us to come to him when we sin; he wants to grant us forgiveness. Christ died so that we might be forgiven our sins; he came in the flesh. He knows our weaknesses and our frailties. Never get bogged down by sin and never let Satan trick you into believing that you have committed such a grievous sin that God will not forgive you. All it takes is genuine, sincere repentance.

Determination

After the realization that you have sinned, and after you have repented, what is left? Point four: **Determination**. Put your transgression behind you and move forward; determined to conquer sin and to not repeat your mistakes. With God's Holy Spirit, you can do it! Do not ever let your sin weigh you down and cause you to feel you can never measure up to God's standards. I was told one time: when you sin, and you will, do not let it drag you down.

Now that did not mean that I was not to be concerned about sin, or that I should condone what I had done. It did not mean that I should not spend time in repentance and feel remorse. No, it meant to deal with the sin and its implications and keep pushing on towards the goal of God's kingdom. You can dwell on sin so much, that it becomes a stumbling block and a hindrance to your spiritual growth!

We can be confident that God has forgiven us our sins. It is fine to feel remorse and sorrow when you sin; we need to show God we are genuinely sorry. But, do not let it consume you. Set yourself to not sin again, that should be a goal that we all strive for in our lives. God forgives us and cleanses us from our sins, but that does not mean that we have license to keep going out and repeating our mistakes. We are expected to overcome and to learn from our past failings!

John 8:10-11

10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

11 She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Judas, after he had betrayed Christ, could not bear the weight of his sin. Instead of crying out to God and repenting, he let his sin destroy him and he hanged himself in a field. David however went to God in heartfelt repentance, overcame his sin confident in God's forgiveness and moved on. David earned a place of honor and respect in God's kingdom. Whenever you feel weighed down by sin I encourage you to read Psalm 51, know that you can overcome, know that you can move on in confidence and know that you can earn a place of honor and respect in God's kingdom. I would like to leave you with these final words:

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The next time you fall, recognize what has happened. Be honest with yourself and then go to your loving, forgiving God, in heartfelt prayer and repent of your sin. Confess it all to God in sincerity, knowing that you will be forgiven and that your sin will not be counted against you. That does not mean that there may not be the consequences of your sin that you still have to deal with, but God will give you peace of mind and help you to cope with the situation. Then determine to move forward with your mind set to not sin again...to go your way and sin no more.

Yes, you can recover from sin, thank God that we can go to Him in repentance, confess our sins and know that He hears and for His Son Jesus Christ, who selflessly paid a penalty with His life, to cover our sins and provide a way for us to be forgiven!

(All scriptural references cited from the New King James Edition of the Holy Bible)